

Schooling as Development: The Role and Task of School Principals in National Economic Transformation

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ABSTRACT: Schools exist and operate in environments characterised by national and international policies. Educational policies provide shape, direction and structure to schools and connect them to national education systems and to the wider world around them. Increasingly, many of the actions undertaken and outcomes produced by schools, as well as accountability and performance objectives, are influenced if not controlled by forces operating outside a school or even outside a national education system. These factors are each linked to reforms in education and are noticeable in the design of policies and their implementation, at times producing significant challenges for schools and for principals – tasked with implementing and achieving policy objectives at school level. This comparative qualitative study reports on findings from 10 school principals in England and Jamaica. The main findings are that principals are experiencing national policy overload; principals filter the implementation of government policies in order to cope; principals feel excluded from policy development; and policy content is increasingly framed towards achieving economic competitiveness. Miller's (2016) baseline 'Economic-motor model of schooling' is applied to these findings as an analytical framework. When applied, this framework shows a conflictful relationship between governments and school principals characterised by power relations where national economic development is a primary aim of governments to be delivered by schools/ school leadership.

Introduction

Schools exist and operate in environments characterised by policies, whether international, national and/or school based. Educational policies exist to shape, direct and support a school's direction, as well as helping to influence and/or construct an institutional identity. Simply put, schools cannot exist without policies for they are arguably the lifeblood of an educational system, simultaneously shaping, scaffolding and challenging how and what educational institutions do. Policies exist as targets and benchmarks to be achieved, primarily in such areas as improving outcomes and standards for schools and students as well as improving accountability. Policies also exist to mediate (and/or disrupt) the status quo. For example, some policies may be introduced to curtail practices or occurrences which may have become endemic as well as they may exist to promote and/or facilitate a specific course of action.

Educational policy making can be a fraught activity leading to implementation challenges, due in part to the nature and content of policies themselves as well as due to the convergence of a range of dynamic and spontaneous factors (cultural, social, economic and personal) which highlight the non-linear nature of educational policies and their relationship to the practice of school leadership. It is this recognition that led Miller (2016) to describe the relationship between educational policies and school leadership as conflictful, highlighting tensions between the aims, objectives and intent of educational policies and what is practical or do-able

at the level of a school. The creation of education markets, for example, continues to have a negative impact on school principals and has nearly always led to increased workload (Grace, 1995). Additionally, reforms in education, globally, in both developed and developing countries, have led to the introduction of high-stakes accountability measures such as high-stakes-testing, the introduction and routinisation of school performance league tables and school monitoring through inspections – measures which fuel and reinforce cultures of performativity among school leaders and teachers.

As competition within schools in countries intensifies, competition between schools in different countries has also intensified as schools are reoriented by governments, policy makers and education ministry officials and school principals towards making the education students receive more directly relevant to achieving national economic goals and objectives. According to Stevens et al. (2005), this thrust places increased demands upon schools and serves (primarily) to demotivate rather than encourage school principals. According to Miller (2016), governments in both developing and developed countries are seeking to retain control of the content and therefore the role of education through policies which promote centralisation, pre-defined models for teacher training, surveillance and monitoring, testing and performance targets couched in the language of economic development instead of social transformation – which is a foundational aim of education. Consequently, one could argue that a major pre-occupation of current policies in education is national economic development, achieved through school performance (outcomes). As Kingdon et al. (2014) argue:

Much hope is pinned on education to yield enhanced productivity, economic growth, social development and poverty reduction. However, for education to deliver on these expectations, it must be of sufficient quantity and quality to lead to meaningful learning among young people, a task known to pose considerable challenges. One of the most important challenges is to make the educational macro and governance environment more conducive to reform. (p. 9)

This article presents accounts from school principals in Jamaica (a developing country) and England (a developed country) in relation to how educational policies are recasting their own roles and the role of schooling towards one of (primarily) national economic development and away from social transformation.

The organisation of schooling in England

There are approximately 23,330 state-funded schools in England: 3,446 state secondary schools and 16,884 state primary schools. In January 2016, there were just over 8.4 million students attending state-funded primary schools, state-funded secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units. There are approximately 455,000 teachers in the state sector in England, including just over 22,500 principals.

Education in England is presided over by the Department for Education and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, supported by 152 Local Authorities (LAs). The education system is divided into early years (ages 3–4), primary education (ages 4–11), secondary education (ages 11–18) and tertiary education (ages 18+). Education is free to students in the public education system until they reach university.

Full-time education is compulsory for all children aged between 5 and 16. State-provided schooling and sixth form education is paid for by tax payers. Since the passage of the 1988 Education Reform Act (UK Legislation, 1988), to date reforms in education have intensified. For example, there have been the introduction of a national curriculum, the introduction of the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED), several re-designs to the delivery of initial teacher education, changes to the secondary curriculum and qualifications framework (latterly the introduction of the English baccalaureate), changes to how schools are funded and to the

structure and organisation of schooling, most notably through the introduction of Academies and Free Schools.

The organisation of schooling in Jamaica

In Jamaica, there are just under 1,200 state-funded schools: 206 state-funded secondary schools, technical high schools, and 973 pre-primary, primary, All-Age and Junior High schools. In 2016, the education system catered to approximately 800,000 students at the early childhood, primary and secondary levels. There are approximately 25,000 teachers in the state-funded sector including just under 1,200 principals.

Education in Jamaica is presided over primarily by the Ministry of Education (MoE) through its head office and six regional offices. Formal education is provided mainly by the government, solely or in partnerships with churches and trusts. Formal education also is provided by private schools. As stipulated in the 1980 Education Regulations (Government of Jamaica, 1980), the education system consists of four levels: Early Childhood; Primary; Secondary and Tertiary. There is a cost-sharing mechanism in place in Jamaica to fund education which is not free to students.

Over the last decade and a half, Jamaica's education system has undergone several significant reforms. For example, recommendations in the report of the Task Force on Educational Reform (2004) led to the establishment of the Education System Transformation Programme (ESTP) which has overseen the creation of the National College for Educational Leadership, National Education Inspectorate, National Council on Education, Jamaica Teaching Council and the Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission. The ESTP was followed, in 2010, by the Education Sector Plan of 'Vision 2030: National Development Plan Jamaica', an ambitious multifaceted program of activities and initiatives aimed at charting Jamaica's path to achieving 'developed' country status by the year 2030.

The Policy Context of Educational Reform

Educational policy making is a highly politicised endeavour (Olssen, Codd & O'Neill, 2004) and without question, 'within education, across phases and across continents, the policy context impacts decisively on shaping the institutional environment' (Bell & Stevenson, 2006, p. 23). As a consequence, it is necessary to understand a national political environment as consisting of 'all the activities of cooperation, negotiation and conflict in the use, production and distribution of resources through the interaction of formal and informal institutions and through the distribution of private and public power' (Leftwich, 2006, p. 10). Put differently, 'education is intertwined with the nation's economic necessities emanating from capitalist modes of production, and their maintenance and protection in a globalised deregulated marketplace' (Miller, 2015, p. 40).

These observations are highly relevant to educational reforms undertaken in both England and Jamaica, for example, within the last two decades, as well as to the current practice of school leadership in both these countries. In England for example, the introduction of the 1988 Education Reform Act (UK Legislation, 1988) is widely regarded as a turning point in how education was conceptualised and managed. The Act had several objectives including restructuring the link between schools and local authorities, increasing accountability of the teaching profession, the introduction of a national curriculum and offering parents greater choice over what schools their children attended. These policy directives were supplemented by directives in the 'Every Child Matters' agenda (Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 2003) and the Children Act (UK Legislation, 2004). This package of reforms provided what Ball (2008) called 'the infrastructure for an education market and a neo-liberal vision of the education

system' (p. 80). These reforms have been followed by several others, introduced by successive governments with varying degrees of focus on: the fee structure of university students, the curriculum to be pursued by students in compulsory education, the organisation of teacher training and the types of schooling.

These education reforms leave little doubt that such changes in educational policy have also resulted in changes to the role and tasks of school principals. Farrar (2012), in her foreword to a review of the school leadership conducted by Earley et al. for the National College for Teaching and Leadership thus reasons:

The English education system is experiencing an era of unprecedented change, at least as significant as the move to local Management of Schools after 1988. Nowhere are these changes more keenly felt than amongst the leadership teams and governing bodies of the country's schools. The most public manifestation of change has been the move to academy status for several thousand schools and the opening of new free schools. (Farrar, 2012, p. 5)

Similar policy changes in education were happening across the Atlantic in Jamaica. In 2000, the Taskforce on Education Reform was established and its influential report published in 2004. The report contained several recommendations for improving the nation's educational infrastructure, from nursery to university, including the establishment of a National College for Educational Leadership, the Jamaica Teaching Council, the Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission and the National Education Inspectorate – all of which have now been established. Several other recommendations have also been adopted. In 2004 also, the Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA) (Government of Jamaica, 2004) was passed which outlined a series of rights for children and young people within and outside education, supplemented by measures provided for in the policy, 'Every Child Can Learn, Every Child Must Learn' (Task Force on Educational Reform, 2004). These were later followed by the introduction in 2010 of the Education Sector Plan of 'Vision 2030: National Development Plan Jamaica' (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2009), which is currently guiding many of the strategic and operational activities within the education sector and inside schools.

One key outcome of these reforms has been the changing nature of school leadership. In England, for example, whereas the education system appears to be moving further towards a state of controlled devolution, in Jamaica, it appears the education system is moving towards greater centralisation. Despite the degree of devolution and/or centralisation however, at the heart of these reforms is arguably the need to secure national economic development through schools and schooling, manifested in and guided by a new policy paradigm which constitutes what Ball (2011) describes as a 'new moral environment' (p. 45).

School Leadership and Education Reform

The recent global interest in education reform, covering the last three to four decades, coincides with a period of increased interest in educational leadership around the world (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). As Grace (1995) points out, the study of school leadership should be placed within its socio-historical, moral and political contexts of schooling in order to make sense of school leadership in the 'wider political, cultural, economic and ideological movements in society' (p. 5). Grace further highlights that a reductionist approach to the study of educational leadership is inadequate (and perhaps inaccurate) since instead of focusing on contextual issues and factors, it places emphasis on quasi-scientific management solutions developed with little regard for contextual specificity. In my view, such conflictful tendencies highlight the gap between policy content and objectives from the lived realities of schools and principals.

It is acknowledged that the practice of school leadership is influenced and shaped decisively by its wider environment, and by the power relations existing within that environment (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). The nature of that environment will be formed by and from a range of factors, be they social, economic, or technological, working against or together, unique to each context, in a way that influences and impacts each educational institution within that context. As Kingdon et al. (2014) highlight, 'The paths and outcomes of educational policies are overwhelmingly impacted by political processes and practices' (p. 9) underpinned by cultural, regulatory and economic shifts which are contributing to volatility and uncertainty in a school's internal environment.

Nevertheless, governments are interested in students going to schools and receiving an education, since (arguably), schooling is increasingly being seen as having a significant role to play in national economic development (Kingdon et al., 2014) through the production of a skilled workforce increase and an increase in individual worker productivity (Patrinos, Ridao-Cano & Sakellariou, 2006). As Lee (1999, p. 16) notes, 'Human capital is considered one of the major factors in explaining ... economic growth'. Furthermore, professionals, including accountants, scientists, engineers, lawyers, nurses and teachers are produced by an educational system and if these workers are not in good supply, economic growth could be threatened – and through government policy, it has become the responsibility of the school principal to ensure this does not happen.

It is perhaps the need to secure national economic development which underpins the plethora of policy initiatives handed to schools at any one time. In a speech to school leaders, former UK Schools Minister, David Miliband (2003, np), proposed, 'There is nothing more infuriating for professionals in the field than the feeling that the latest set of ministerial priorities will soon be superseded by a new set'. And, as proposed by Lewis and Murphy (2008, pp. 135-136), '... the reality is that ... many headteachers are more like branch managers than chief executive officers' who are 'handed down expectations, targets, new initiatives and resources – all of which may or may not be manageable in their context'. The observations of Miliband and Lewis and Murphy underline the fact that, at any one time, several factors converge on schools and school principals thus bringing into sharp focus the need for school leadership to be different. As also proposed by Miller (2012), 'educational leadership in these unpredictable and swiftly changing times requires an approach that is neither top-down nor bottom-up, but that is encompassing, synergistic, innovative, and practical' (p. 9). Such an approach to school leadership takes into account challenges associated with a principal's role and how this role is being restructured and redefined by national economic imperatives.

The research

This study was undertaken over a period of five years, 2010 – 2015. Data were collected using ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. Ethnomethodology is used when trying to understand the social orders people use to make sense of the world through analysing their accounts and descriptions of their day-to-day experiences (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984), and conversation analysis emerged out of ethnomethodology (Rayner & Ribbins, 1999). There were several face-to-face, one-to-one conversations between the researcher and school principals, occurring over a period of five years. By analysing these conversations, I wanted to 'enable heads to speak for themselves' (Mortimer & Mortimer, 1991, p. vii) by providing them with a sense of individuality through portrait based accounts of their professional lives and experiences.

Participants

There were 10 principals, seven females and three males. There were four Jamaican principals, all of whom are females. There were six English principals, three males and three females. Between them, these 10 principals have 168 years of combined teaching experience or an average of nearly 17 years individually. Between them, the Jamaican principals have 65 years of combined teaching experience or an individual average of 16.25 years. English principals, between them, have 103 years of combined teaching experience or an individual average of 17.1 years. There were four primary school principals and six secondary school principals. Four principals lead schools in inner-city communities; four in suburban areas and two in rural/remote areas. All four Jamaican principals have experience of being a principal in only one school whereas all English principals have experience of being a principal in two or three schools.

The average age of the 10 principals is 48 years. One had been in post for one year; two for two years; one for three years; three for five years; one for six years; one for eight years and one for nine years. Together the principals have a total of 70 years combined leadership experience. The four Jamaican principals have 18 years' leadership experience between them or an individual average of 4.5 years whereas the six English principals have a total of 52 years' leadership experience between them or an individual average of 8.6 years.

Analysis

Miller's (2016, p. 147) Economic-motor model of schooling is used as a framework to explain and analyse the experiences and views of principals. Comprising seven interlocking components, this baseline model attempts to interpret the relationship between educational policy, national economic development and the practice of school leadership. By mapping the main findings to different parts of the model, the role and experiences of principals within their national educational policy environments in terms of policy implementation are highlighted. Furthermore, as the different parts of the model represent a different part of a national education system, the model is useful in showing the trickle-down effect in the relationship between actions and actors. The model asserts that national governments position education as the primary vehicle and a panacea to achieving national economic development, and is based on four assumptions: (a) educational policies are directed towards achieving economic growth and development, (b) technocrats, working for a government, insist principals/schools adopt and implement government policies without regard for context, (c) through schooling, teachers prepare students to contribute to economic development by providing them an education 'prescribed' by government, (d) national economic development is hinged on students who receive governments' 'prescribed' education.

Findings/Reflections

From the interview data, four key findings related to principals' interaction with national policies have emerged. These are: principals are experiencing national policy overload; principals filter the implementation of government policies in order to cope; principals feel excluded from policy development; and policy content is increasingly framed towards achieving economic competitiveness. These are discussed in turn below.

National Policy Overload

A significant theme among principals was that of being bombarded by policies. Principals described feeling overwhelmed by the 'flurry of policies' which sometimes made it difficult

for them to attend to one set of priorities before others were provided for them. Principals in both England and Jamaica pointed out that a changing policy landscape sometimes made it difficult for them to keep up and that as a result, they were finding it increasingly difficult to make sense of what the government is asking schools and teachers to do.

Changes in the educational policy landscape are making it harder for schools to make sense of their reality. I dare say, even their identities. Today we are a normal school; next week we are an Academy, resulting in all kinds of changes to our funding structure, staffing structure, governance structure and even our curricula offering. (Principal 1, England, Male)

Multiple reforms are taking place in Jamaica's educational system at the moment. There is much emphasis on accountability through school inspections, on improving the quality of teaching & learning and on the professionalisation of teachers. These changes are happening simultaneously, at a time when we have more students in classrooms and fewer teachers being recruited. It seems to me, outputs and inputs do not match and this is making it difficult for schools to deliver on some critical areas. (Principal 8, Jamaica, Female)

Feelings of being overloaded by national policy initiatives have led to feelings of exasperation by principals. These feelings have led principals to assert that:

[T]he government has got to be careful to allow principals and teachers to stand still, 'to catch their breath'; to internalise a policy before another one is introduced. Otherwise, schools will be caught in a whirlwind and that could undermine their effectiveness. (Principal 10, Jamaica, Female)

In view of the demands and expectations of policies, principals are having to (constantly) engage in policy filtering to cope with the increased and increasing demands of their roles associated with their job roles.

Policy Filtering

Principals reflected on many practical and other issues that constrained their ability and that of their schools to implement specific government policies in full.

We are very much guided by national policies, but we localise national policies to fit our context. We are committed to the 'Every child must learn' agenda but wholesale policy implementation cannot work at my school. We are a small school with 74 students and five teachers, including myself, located in a deep rural community. Parents of our students are mainly farmers or they are unemployed. As a school, we barely have enough money to cover day to day expenses let alone 'extras'. Whereas policy requirements may be the same for my school and the one located in an urban area, implementation will be very different – as is the case with my school. (Principal 4, Jamaica, Female)

By choosing not to implement government policies in full, principals were involved in risk-taking, a crucial trait among successful leaders. Furthermore, they did not consider themselves to be breaking the rules, but rather bending or re-interpreting the rules, accounting for their school's context.

My school is located in a socially neglected inner-city community in London. Poor achievement outcomes have been a defining feature of this school for years, underpinned by a high rate of staff turnover. However, as a school, we recently took the decision to focus on raising attainment in all subjects at all grade levels and for this year, this is everybody's mission. The government want schools to focus on 'healthy eating', but as a school, we feel we cannot jump on that band wagon at this time because we have much more at stake. Don't get me wrong, healthy eating is important, but we simply do not have the staff and resources to focus on implementing a healthy eating program now. That is something we will

have to do another time, perhaps next year. For now though, our focus is on raising attainment throughout the entire school. (Principal 2, England, Female)

Nearly all principals in the study had engaged in forms of policy filtering where policy content was believed to be inconsistent with existing school realities or where resources were not available to implement policy priorities. Furthermore, they chose to focus on what they determined was more likely to succeed in their school and in ways that were practical and reasonable and under conditions that were least disruptive.

Schools Excluded from Policy Development

Principals wanted greater involvement in policy development. This, they reasoned would assist with providing them a greater degree of content ownership which is more likely to influence successful implementation. Their involvement at the policy implementation stage was believed to be fraught, not only for individual schools but also for the entire education system.

[G]overnment need firstly to equip schools with the infrastructure and staffing they need; then they can expect all kinds of outcomes. They need to get schools involved early on in the policy process. It's unrealistic to ask schools to 'provide learning that cuts across horizons and frontiers' when we do not even have electricity in classrooms let alone computers. What comes first: the chicken or the egg? (Principal 4, Jamaica, Female)

Government policy is too 'top down'. More consultation is required with people on the ground. Survey principals and staff and let them help establish the priorities for the next 5-10 years. But to expect compliance simply because 'you are the government and you pay our salaries' is not good enough. Give us a hand in helping to determine the priorities in education so when the policies land on our desks, we may just be better prepared. (Principal 8, Jamaica, Female)

It is very important to get input from staff about how we can implement certain government policies at school level. There is a limit to how much such input will achieve however, but it is very important for us as a school that staff feel they have been given a chance to consider and debate some of what we are asked to do. There is absolutely no point pushing ahead with a particular policy or a policy in a format [way] that will create or exacerbate tensions rather than result in solutions. This could affect staff moral and adversely affect pupils. (Principal 5, England, Male)

Principals expressed a strong desire to comply with national policy directives in ways that produce deep and meaningful change for students and their families. However, they believe their ability to effect change was hampered not only by the content of policies but also by the process of policy development and implementation.

Policy Content and Economic Competitiveness

Principals were agreed that the changing global economic environment has influenced not only the speed at which policies are being developed (discussed above) but also the content of some policies. Although not highlighting specific policies, they argue that governments were reconstructing a narrative around the role and value of schooling towards one that favours, primarily, national economic development.

Over the last decade, government policy has steadily shifted from a focus on social transformation to one of economic transformation. This is reflected in how schools are run – like businesses, some with Chief Executives. Furthermore, this is also reflected in the numbers of and kinds of teachers being employed as

well as the subjects deemed by governments to be essential. I am very much of the view that successive governments seem to think that schools are going to deliver our country from the economic malaise they have put us in. (Principal 9, England, Female)

Governments are keen to pass the buck. ... They blame teachers and principals and parents for all that is wrong in society, except for natural disasters. This blame culture is very much present in their approach to policy-making. They focus policies on raising standards, on improving outcomes for students and families and on achieving self-reliance. Contrary to what is written down, the focus of many of these policies is not related to individual self-reliance, it is about growing a national economy. ... this focus is not on improving schools or even improving the student as a person ... it's more about getting students 'work ready', even if they have only limited social skills and limited understanding of the world they live in. (Principal 1, England, Male)

There was a sense of frustration among principals that, increasingly, governments appeared to be treating education not as a means but the singular means restoring and/or guaranteeing national economic competitiveness.

Discussion

Schools do not operate independent of the national state and it is the national state that determines the parameters within and conditions under which schools can operate. A state has certain national objectives it must meet and others it would like to meet. Furthermore, a state has certain objectives it would like schools and other institutions of learning to meet, if as a nation state, it is to meet broader national objectives. This is the case in both developed and developing countries globally. Therefore, and consistent with meeting such objectives, it is perhaps understandable why a national government would want to play a central role in the 'what' and the 'how' of schooling. Despite this understanding however, multiple tensions exist between what a government expects and what is practical or even reasonable for a government to expect based on the peculiar characteristics of schools. Unfortunately however, government policies do not make space for the 'on the ground realities' (Ball et al., 2011, p. 629) of schools and as a result, principals feel they have no choice but to challenge or ignore the directives of government, bend the rules to suit their context, and explain or justify their actions later. As proposed by Giddens (1984), people have to assert their agency against both the rules (structures) and the systems.

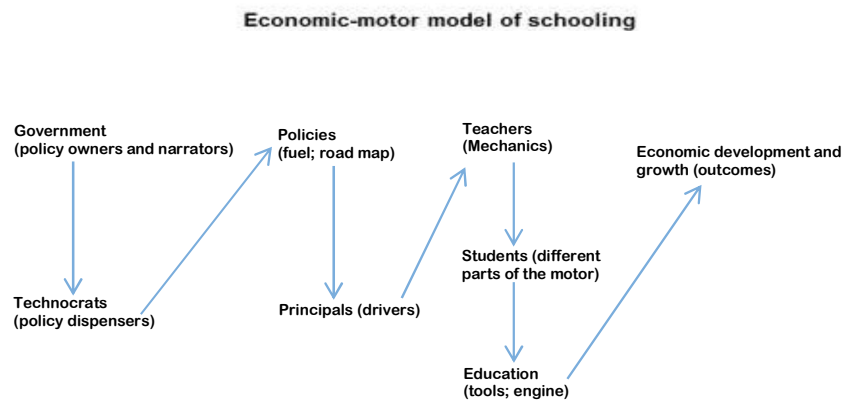
It is understood that schools cannot function without policies, nor can an education system. Principals however feel under intense pressure from a 'whirlwind' and a 'flurry' of policies that sometimes make it difficult to 'catch my breath' or to 'make sense of my identity'. This is problematic since not only does it impact their ability to do their jobs, it also leads to policy implementation fatigue. Policy implementation fatigue, and thus the whirlwind of policies, diverts attention from existing school priorities and from teaching and learning activities, which can lead to implementation conflicts and stalemate. The situation described by principals is not new and supports the point made earlier by former UK Schools Minister David Miliband (2003).

Schooling as Development, Education its Motor

Despite the whirlwind of policies, there is no indication the British or Jamaican government will 'let up' any time soon. Whereas a national policy context exists for establishing and maintaining the social and international order, there is some evidence that the educational policy context is *the* platform upon which achieving national economic development and

growth rests. In these circumstances, schools and schooling are positioned as panaceas to society's economic growth and appear to have become synonymous to national development. Drawing on the findings from this study, I have produced the *Economic-motor model of schooling*, a baseline model which describes the current approach to national economic development via schooling/school leadership. The model has seven component parts, each explained in turn in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: ECONOMIC-MOTOR MODEL OF SCHOOLING



Assumptions:

1. Government policies in education are directed towards achieving economic growth and development
2. Technocrats 'push' government policies on to principals/ schools
3. Teachers prepare students to contribute to economic development and growth through schooling
4. Students equipped with education contribute to economic development

Source: Miller, 2016, p. 147

Government (policy owners and narrators)

National governments have a legal duty to provide education to its citizens, consistent with its ability to do so. This legal duty is outlined in International Law, namely: Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (UN General Assembly, 1948), Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights (ICECSR) (UN General Assembly, 1966), and Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations, 1989). The critical role of education/schooling in national economic development is emphasised by international agencies such as the United Nations and The World Bank through slogans and statements such as 'education beats poverty'; 'education is not only a right but a passport to human development' and 'education opens doors and expands opportunities and freedoms'. Governments have a duty to create the context and framework in which education/schooling can be provided to and accessed by citizens and they do this through the policies they develop and implement. *As policy owners*, governments determine policy content, for example: the curriculum students should pursue, the number of years of compulsory schooling, the minimum qualification for teachers, the content of initial teacher training, the number of contact days in a school/academic year, and whether education should be free to users or subsidised.

Technocrats & policy officials (policy dispensers)

Technocrats could be described as 'policy dispensers' or 'henchmen'. Used here, henchmen are trusted supporters and advocates of a cause – in this case, government policies and their

successful implementation. The main concern of the henchmen/policy dispenser is getting a policy accepted by the proposed end users. They have little or no concern for individual contexts or specificities of contexts. They are rather like service station attendants whose duty it is to 'pump' or 'sell' the fuel (in this case the actual policy) to drivers (in this case school principals).

The relationship between technocrats (policy dispensers) and principals (drivers) has not always been smooth. Gunter (2012) describes this relationship as a 'game ... where those outside of schools ... controlled the leadership of schools' (p. 18) and where 'the interplay between the agency of the headteacher and the structures that enable and prevent that agency' (p. 172) are almost always at a crossroads. Further, Bell and Stevenson (2006) argue:

How does state policy manifest itself? The tools of policy are of course not value neutral, and the way in which particular policies are enacted in particular contexts are intensely political. ... policies cannot be disconnected from the socio-political environment within which they are framed. (p. 44)

These arguments bring to light some 'theoretical and perspectival and ethical challenges ...' (Ball, 2011, p. 52), which led Eacott (2011) to argue that the current policy context in education is steadily leading to 'the cultural re-engineering of school leadership and the embedding of performativity in the leaders' soul' (p. 47).

Policies (fuel; roadmap)

Educational policies provide direction to and establish the shape of a school system, as well as what goes on in schools. In other words, educational policies are the fuel on which an education/schooling is run, simultaneously establishing parameters and providing direction. No education system, no matter its intent or its management structures, can function effectively without fuel (policies). Educational policies give shape and structure to an education system and can lead to both coherence and mayhem for those who must enforce, deliver or otherwise experience them. In England for example, 'Since the 1988 Education Reform Act, under the leadership of different political administrations, there has been great centralisation' (Rayner, 2014, p. 38) and control despite the rhetoric of choice and school diversity (Bottery, 2007). As Thomson (2010) provides, 'Over less than a decade, English heads gained new freedoms and authorities to act within their schools, but there were also new audit and risk management procedures and new lines of accountability that delimited what could be done' (p. 9).

Principals (drivers)

School principals are crucial to the success or failure of schools and therefore in the success and/or failure of individuals and/or national development. A principal's effectiveness is a function of several factors. In their theory of 'Situational Leadership', Miller and Hutton (2014) argue that effective school leadership is 'situated' within an individual but emerges from how they engage with and manage, negotiate and navigate internal and external factors. In other words, leadership is a function of external and internal factors, or $L = f(E_f + I_f)$, where: L = leadership practice; E_f = external factors; I_f = internal factors. They identified external factors including laws, policies, culture, school size and type, staff qualifications and experience, and school location; and internal factors including personal ability, socialisation, skills, experience, ambition, passion, commitment, and enthusiasm.

Miller and Hutton propose that whereas external factors (E_f) set parameters for the practice of leadership, internal factors (I_f) deconstruct, interpret and engage external factors, thereby giving meaning to them; but in a personal and individual way. In other words, in as much as principals are the 'drivers' of government policy at the operational level, they do so in relation to their school's context, their vision for the school, the resources available to the school and where the school is currently at. For example, in drawing on professional and

personal experiences (Hall & Southworth, 1997), the principals in this study engaged in ‘policy filtering’ and ‘policy re-interpretation’, as they saw fit, taking personal and professional risks aimed at providing students with a learning experience broader than what had been prescribed by government.

Teachers (mechanics)

Teachers are key to the success of any education system. Through their skills, knowledge and experience they provide students with the skills and knowledge they need to function effectively and independently in society. In collaboration with the driver (school principal), teachers provide students (the different parts of a motor-vehicle) with the skills, knowledge and tools (content of education) prescribed by the government (policy owners) for their independent flourishing. Article 29 outlines the aims and objectives of the education as follows:

- a) The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
- c) The development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
- d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
- e) The development of respect for the natural environment. (United Nations, 1989)

Although a primary pre-occupation and aim of different governments, it is to be noted that, as set out in international law, the aims of education do not explicitly make reference to an economic aim.

Students (different parts of a vehicle)

Students are the reasons why schools exist. They come from a range of backgrounds and represent different racial/ethnic, cultural, social, religious and other groups. They each have different needs, and it is the responsibility of a principal (driver), working in collaboration with teachers (mechanics) who must provide them with the prescribed education (tools), in order that they may each contribute to national economic development and competitiveness.

Education (engine; tools)

Education adds to a country’s economic growth. As Lee (1999, p. 16) notes, ‘Human capital is considered one of the major factors in explaining ... economic growth’. As the skills of a workforce increase and are utilised, worker productivity increases (Patrinos, Rida-Cano & Sakellariou, 2006). Without an available stock of professionals (teachers, accountants, scientists, engineers, lawyers, nurses, lawyers, etc.), national economic growth could be at risk. Governments are therefore interested in providing students with an education that simultaneously serves as the engine of economic growth and the tools to be used to initiate and stimulate economic competitiveness.

Economic growth/development (outcomes of education)

Rivera-Batiz (2007) proposes a positive correlation between increased educational attainment and national economic growth. The World Bank (1995) provides that ‘Education is critical for economic growth and poverty reduction ... education contributes to the accumulation of

human capital, which is essential for higher incomes and sustained economic growth' (p. 1). Further, Lucas (1993) suggests, 'The main engine of growth is the accumulation of human capital – of knowledge – and the main source of differences in living standards among nations is differences in human capital' (p. 270). A significant feature of these studies is the positive relationship between national economic development and schooling/education. This positive relationship is one that governments are keen to exploit and explore as evidenced in the content of educational policies. The implication for a school principal is clear: as determined by national policy objectives, a country's journey to national economic development starts at the gate of a school.

Conclusions

Educational policy making is a highly politicised activity (Olssen, Codd & O'Neill, 2004) that national governments believe has the power to rescue the economic fortunes of nations. The discourse and values of the business sector have steadily influenced educational policy making and the practice of school leadership, even if these values conflict with the values of school principals (Addison, 2009). Educational policy making for economic development restructures the aims of education, the value and focus of education and the content of education; and in doing so, this has produced several challenges to schools and to how school leadership is both conceptualised and practiced. Principals feel they are forced to consciously filter policies, deciding against those they felt were unrealistic or those they did not have adequate resources to implement. For although principals in this study wanted to be compliant with national objectives and aims, they were forced to prioritise policy implementation at school along the lines of what they felt could succeed in their schools' context and for which they had appropriate and adequate resources. A major source of frustration for school principals who are learning leaders was that the content of educational policies had steadily shifted towards national economic imperatives and away from social transformation objectives, confirming that in England and Jamaica, school principals appear to be caught in a '... game in which market-based economic imperatives have become central to both their professional success and leadership practice' (Addison, 2009, p. 335), and where they must learn a set of rules 'couched in economic language and with frequent intervention, or interference, from those beyond education' (Eacott, 2011, p. 50).

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